

## Imaginary Q

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Summary: Lonesome Naomi Wildman meets an "imaginary friend" with a secret agenda.

## Imaginary Q

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> <br> Imaginary Q

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> <br> Three-year-old Naomi Wildman was very upset. Seven of Nine had promised to play Kotis Kot tonight, but she said she "was unable to attend tonight because of important matters concerning Engineering". Naomi asked Neelix if he could play but he said he was "attending an important meeting with some government officials so that we would be able to pass through this region of space". When Naomi asked her mother, she said she was "busy working on a damaged coolant vent". She was tempted to ask Captain Janeway, but she already knew the answer. Everyone was busy! No one had any time to play with a little girl. Naomi was pouting on her couch. She was bored. Her homework was finished and she didn't want to finish the holodeck adventure with Flotter without her mother. She was tired of playing with her toys and playing anything \*by herself\*

> <br> She decided to go for a walk. If she walked through every single corridor on the ship, she probably could kill off enough time before dinner. She slid off the couch and left. She really wished someone would get married and had a baby. Naomi wasn't sure how that worked, but her mom said that most people who had a baby were married. Her mom and dad were married, so it made sense. If there was a baby on the ship, she could take care of it. When it grew up, she could play with it and go to school with it. There were a few couples on the ship, like Tom and B'Elanna, but she didn't think they were going to have a baby any time soon. B'Elanna was too busy to have a baby. After a half an hour of walking, Naomi was starving, so she went to the mess hall to get a snack.

> <br> The mess hall wasn't too crowded, but she noticed Tom and B'Elanna sitting at one of the tables by the window. Naomi grabbed a piece of fruit from the bowl and went to sit down. She rested her

head on one of her hand and stared out the window while she ate. It wasn't until someone touched her shoulder did she remember where she was.

> <br> "Naomi?" Tom asked. Naomi came back to reality.

> <br> "Yeah?" Naomi asked.

> <br> "You okay?" he inquired.

> <br> "Yeah, I'm fine. I'm just bored," she replied. "Everyone's working. I have no one to play with."

> <br> "Oh, sorry, that's too bad," Tom commented. "Well, I have to go." Tom left Naomi alone.

> <br> "I hate being little," Naomi said, her chin quivering slightly. "I wish I had a friend."

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> <br> The voice of the little half-Ktarian girl rang through Q's head. He felt sorry for her, in his own Q-ish way. Q was more sensitive, now that he had his son. Q, being omnipotent and all-knowing, decided that this would be the perfect opportunity to work on his mortal mind-bending tricks. Besides, he hadn't seen Kathy in awhile and he missed her. Now all Q had to do was figure out how to pull off his masterful trick of the year!

> <br> Q had a new apprentice (we'll call him Quentin) who had expressed an interest in learning more about mortals. Q thought this would be an excellent opportunity. If he could create a friend out of Quentinâ€|it would have to be someone the adults could find out about otherwise it wouldn't workâ€|something like an invisibleâ€|no, an imaginary friendâ€|Quentin could study Naomi and life aboard Voyagerâ€|Naomi would be happy, Quentin would learn, and Q could visit Kathy at the endâ€|perfect.

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> <br> It was afternoon the next day. Naomi had just finished her weekly History lesson with Lt. Tuvok. Before that, she had Biology with the Doctor and between classes a short break to visit Flotter. Now, she was going to the mess hall for lunch before going back to her room to finish her homework. After that, Seven of Nine and Naomi were going to meet with the Captain to talk about Naomi being Bridge Assistant and how she has progressed with her studies. Her mom promised her that she would meet Naomi and Neelix for dinner, followed by some time in the Holodeck before bed. Naomi knew she would be exhausted by the night.

> <br> As Naomi walked along the empty corridor, she tried to remember the facts she learned in history.

> <br> "2030 Zefram Cochrane Born, 2061 Zefram Cochran achieves Warp 1," Naomi recalled.

> Very good, Naomi, a voice said. Naomi stopped. <br>

> "Hello?" she asked. Nothing. The corridor was empty. She continued. <br>

> "2117 Zefram Cochrane disappears, 2161 United Federation of Planets founded." <br> 2160 is the correct answer, the voice corrected. Naomi stopped again and looked around. Still no one.

> <br> "No, it was 2161," Naomi replied, feeling quite silly she was talking to air. "2160 is the end of the Earth and Romulan war. That's when the Neutral Zone was formed. The next year, Earth, Teller, Andor, Centaurus VII found the United Federation of Planets. The Articles of the Federation are signed on Babel."

> <br> Are you sure? the voice asked.

> <br> "Positive," Naomi replied. "I have a very good memory. That's what Lt. Tuvok said."

> <br> You're very smart. You're right it was 2161, the voice replied.

> <br> "Who are you? Why can't I see you?" Naomi asked, very

frustrated. She put her hands on her hips, waiting for an answer.

> <br> Close your eyes. Naomi did not feel very safe about this. She was tempted to just continue walking, ignoring the voice. But she complied.

> <br> Open your eyes. Naomi complied again. When she opened, a man was standing in front of her. He was tall, but not too tall. Reddish hair, and blue eyes.

> <br> "Hello," he said. Naomi looked at him suspiciously.

> <br> "Who are you?" she asked. "I've never seen you before."

> <br> "Quentin. I'm not from around here, I'm visiting," he answered calmly.

> <br> "Why are you here?" she asked, suspiciously. "You aren't an evil alien here to murder the crew—are you?". Quentin chuckled.

> <br> "No, Naomi, I'm not," Quentin replied. Naomi eyed the man.

> <br> "How do you know my name?" she continued. "Since I've never met you before, you shouldn't know that." Quentin started walking down the corridor, motioning that Naomi should come with him. Checking to make sure no one was around, she followed.

> <br> "To answer your question, Ms. Wildman, I know everything you know," Quentin answered. He smiled down at the girl, who produced a confused expression. She gazed up at him, her mind racing for answers.

> <br> "Omnipotent?" she inquired. "But I'm not omnipotent and you said you know everything I know. Besides, the only omnipotent beings are the Qs. And Qs are bad. You aren't a Q—are you?". She stopped short, refusing to go farther. Quentin laughed. He remembered what Q had said.

> <br> "No, of course not," he lied. He couldn't possibly tell her. If she found out who knows what could happen. Captain Janeway might find out and their entire prank would be ruined. And Quentin wouldn't have learned a thing about mortal children.

> <br> "Then what are you?" she asked smugly, trying to make him confess. Unfortunately, Quentin had a fool-proof, or at least a child-proof, plan.

> <br> "I'm your imaginary friend," he simply answered. She raised her eyes in disbelief.

> <br> "I don't remember imagining you," Naomi quickly responded. "How is that possible?". Quentin stalled.

> <br> "Uh, well, um, you see, it's like this, um, you see, well, it's very complicated," Quentin hastily said. "It, it's far beyond your comprehension how these things work. But try not to worry too much about it." Naomi didn't believe him.

> <br> "I don't believe you," she replied. "I'm telling Commander Tuvok." She started off.

> <br> "No!" he cried a little too loud. "I mean, um, we could have fun. I can do anything. I'm from your imagination, remember, and imaginations can do whatever they like." The idea did sound appealing. It intrigued Naomi. Without giving another thought, she replied, "Anything?". He smiled. He got her.

> <br> "Yes, of course, would I ever lie to you?".

> <br> "Well, I don't remember my imagination ever lying to me. I don't think it's possible." Naomi searched her mind. She grinned at last. "Let's go to my room and we can play. Imaginary friends do play, right?". She hadn't had too much experience with imaginary friends. But Quentin's approving smile and outstretched hand was enough of an answer.

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> <br> Naomi and Quentin entered her quarters. It was empty. Ensign Samantha Wildman, Naomi's mother, was on a duty shift until dinner. She showed Quentin her room, toy box, and computer (which was

programmed at the lowest security clearance level). On the opposite wall from Naomi's door was the door to her mothers room. In the middle, close to the door, was the table. The couch and chairs were next to it and computer screen on the wall in front was programmed to show Naomi old Earth programs called videos. Tom had suggested them when Naomi was around two to keep her occupied.

> <br> "What do you want to do first?" Naomi asked. Quentin sifted through the names of games Naomi liked in his mind. Which one was her favorite? Q had told him. He should remember. Ah, yes, Kotis Kot.

> <br> "How about Kotis Kot?" he suggested. "I know how much you love it. I am, of course, from your mind."

> <br> "Sure," she replied. "You know how to play?". She set the game out on the table where she and Seven usually played.

> <br> "Of course," Quentin replied. "I know how to play everything you know how to play." He tried to sound as convincing as possible. He was a bit concerned that she would discover he was Q. He tried to play itâ€|.what was the term? Oh yes. He tried to play it cool.

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> <br> Naomi and Quenting played for several hours, they laughed and talked about alien species and space battles. He was much more fun that stuffy Seven. She was having so much fun she forgot about meeting Neelix for lunch in the mess hall and about meeting Seven for the meeting with Captain Janeway. It was nearing five o'clock.

> <br> Neelix was concerned about Naomi and contacted Seven of Nine.

> <br> "Neelix to Seven of Nine," he requested as he tapped his silver commbadge.

> <br> "Seven of Nine."

> <br> "Seven, have you seen Naomi?" he asked, rather worried. "She was supposed to

> be here for lunch. Now, this isn't the first time she's missed it, but she usually comes and tells me afterwards why she missed lunch. But she hasn't come at all today." There was a pause.<br>

> "No, I do not know where she is," Seven of Nine replied brusquely. "She was to meet Captain Janeway and myself in the Captain's Ready Room over an hour ago and has yet to come. I am on my way to her quarters." Neelix relaxed, slightly, but was concerned why she had not gone to the Ready Room. Naomi usually looked forward with great anticipation to meetings with Captain Janeway, and it was shocking to hear that she had not. <br>

> "Oh good, I'm glad you're going," Neelix said. "Let me know when you talk to her what happened, okay? I'd really appreciate." <br>

> "Of course, Seven of Nine out." The comm link ended.<br>

> Seven of Nine approached the door to the quarters and rang the chime. Naomi jumped in surprise. Oh no! I forgot about the meeting! she thought. <br>

> "You may enter," she answered politely, fearing it was Captain Janeway herself. "Don't say anything, Quentin". The doors swooshed open and Seven of Nine enter. Naomi relaxed in her composure. "Oh, Seven, it's only you."<br>

> "Naomi Wildman, you have failed to reconvene at the designated coordinates at the specified time, are you ill?" Seven asked in her Borg-ish manner. Reconvene? Designated coordinates? <br>

> "Are you asking why I didn't come?" Naomi asked, quite confused.<br>

> "Yes."<br>

> "Oh, well, you seeâ€|. What was she going to say? That she was playing with her imaginary friend? No, that would be silly. "I

gotâ€|distracted." <br>

> "Distracted?".<br>

> "Yeah, I decided to play a little Kotis Kot after finishing my homework, and I lost track of the time," Naomi lied. She hadn't even started her homework. "I'm sorry. Please don't be mad." <br>

> "I am not mad, I am disappointed," Seven clarified, using a term Captain Janeway used quite often with her. "I requested that you meet us at the appropriate time and place and you have failed. If this had been an emergency and you had gottenâ€|distracted, it might have proved fatal for the ship or crew." Seven was very good with guilt trips. She had learned a lot from her mentor.<br>

> Naomi felt horrible and Quentin whistling showtunes (how he knew showtunes was beyond Naomi's comprehension) didn't help. Finally irritated enough, Naomi blurted, "Quentin, please be quiet." The room appeared empty, other than Naomi and Seven of Nine.<br> "Who are you speaking to, Naomi Wildman?" Seven asked.

> <br> "Who are you speaking to, Naomi Wildman?" Quentin mocked. Naomi laughed.

> <br> "Me? I, um," she didn't know where to begin. "My imaginary friend." Naomi glanced over to where Quentin was sitting, yet Seven could not see anyone. "Yeah, that's right. My imaginary friend."

> <br> "Your imaginary friend?"

> <br> "Yeah, his name is Quentin," she said. "We've been playing Kotis Kot." Seven of Nine raised her eyebrows.

> <br> "You have been playing Kotis Kot with yourâ€|imaginary friend?"

> <br> "Yup, that's right." Naomi gave Seven her best smile. Seven of Nine turned to leave. "You aren't going to tell Mom or Neelix or the Captain, are you? Please don't. I won't do it again." Naomi gave her a sad, puppy dog look. "Please."

> <br> "All right, I won't," Seven promised. "I will see you later." Seven left without another word.

> <br> "Whew!" Naomi said once she left. "I'm glad that's over."

> <br> "Yeah," Quentin agreed. "Well, you know it is dinner time. Would you like to go eat now?" Naomi nodded her head.

> <br> "Yeah, I'm famished," she replied. "I haven't eaten since breakfast!"

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> <br> Dinner went with out much hassle. Seven of Nine had kept her promise and not told Neelix or Sam about Naomi's new imaginary friend. Although she was concern, she decided it would be best to wait.

> <br> Naomi requested that Quentin wait in her quarters during dinner, so she could have some alone time with Neelix and Sam since she hadn't seem them since breakfast.

> <br> "Seven tells me you missed your appointment with the Captain," Sam said. "Care to tell me why?". Naomi took a quick sip of her drink before answering.

> <br> "I was just playing a game of Kotis Kot and I sort of forgot I had the appointment," she answered. It wasn't exactly a lie, but it wasn't the whole truth. Naomi felt terrible, but Quentin had advised her not to tell her mom. He said her mom might make Quentin leave and Naomi didn't want him to go. They had fun together and she really wanted a friend. It was like a dream come true to have Quentin around.

> <br> Meanwhile, Quentin went back to the Q Continuum to have a little discussion with Q.

> <br> "You are doing an excellent job, my boy, excellent!" Q exclaimed. "We've got her right where we want her." Quentin, having some sense, disagreed.

> <br> "I don't like lying to her," he replied. "She has to lie because of me".  
> <br> "Oh, hush. Minor detail, minor detail."  
> <br> =/\=  
> <br> The next morning, Naomi hurried to the Captain's Ready Room, to make up for the meeting she missed yesterday. She was in such a hurry and determined not to be late, that she actually arrived fifteen minutes before she was supposed to. She beat Seven there! Unfortunately, Quentin insisted on coming along.  
> <br> "You have to promise not to say anything," Naomi had insisted. "Don't knock anything over and don't say anything."  
> <br> "They can't hear me," he replied.  
> <br> As the doors of the turbolift opened, she whispered with her forefinger to her lips, "Shh!". Chakotay, Harry, and Tuvok stared at her. She smiled weakly.  
> <br> As soon as Captain Janeway was ready, and Seven of Nine, they started their meeting.  
> <br> "I see your studies are progressing nicely, Naomi," Janeway began. "And you are doing an excellent job as Captain's Assistant."

> <br> "Thank you, ma'am," Naomi replied. Quentin hovered over her.

> <br> "Naomi Wildman has expressed an interest recently to participate in activities regarding engineering and the astrometrics lab," Seven of Nine continued. "While I believe this education will be beneficial to her, as she has desire to become captain in the future, I strongly suggestâ€¦caution."  
> <br> "I can see why," Janeway replied, agreeing with Seven. "Naomi, sweetheart, I appreciate you wanting to become captain and to learn as much as you can, but you are only three years old. I think it might be best if you just watched for now. You'll be grown up before you know it. Enjoy being a kid." Naomi looked solemn. "I'm sorry, but I think that's the best thing for you, and for the ship."  
> <br> "You don't think I can do it?" she asked, her eyes filling with tears. She wiped her eyes, wanting to look professional. "I can do it. I can. I'll prove it. Just give me a chance. Please." Quentin crossed his arms and glared at Janeway, although she couldn't see him. Naomi peered at him from the corner of her eyes.  
> <br> "How can she do this to my little Naomi?" he asked. "Come on, Naomi, hurry up. We don't need her. We have fun together, don't we?" Naomi wanted to tell him to be quiet, but she knew she couldn't speak yet.

> <br> "Naomi, I wish I could, I really do," Janeway replied. "But, you are a bit too young. I didn't even start working on some of the problems you've been asking to help with until I was at least ten or twelve." She knew she could do it. She was a ten-year-old trapped in a three-year-olds body. Suddenly, Naomi got very angry. She didn't want to be a stupid Captain's Assistant. Quentin was right. She had more fun with him than she had with Seven of Nine in a lifetime.  
> <br> "Fine, I don't need to help out. In fact, I don't need to be Captain's Assistant!" Naomi stood up, almost knocking the chair down.

> <br> "Naomi-" Janeway began, but Naomi was already walking out the door. Quentin turned to follow, but as he was walking up the steps, Janeway brushed past him and Quentin (although Janeway couldn't feel anything or notice anything) had to hurry to get out of her away and tripped on his own feet. To Naomi, Quentin made a loud thump and he cried, "Ow!". Naomi stopped and turned around and without thinking, responded with, "Quentin! Are you alright?". The entire bridge crew stopped and stared at her. "Uh oh."

> <br> "Quentin?" Janeway asked. "Whose Quentin?". Naomi shrugged.

> <br> "He's no one," she replied quickly and turn to leave and bumped right into awaiting Tuvok, who was blocking her path to the turbolift.

> <br> "No one, Miss Wildman?" he asked suspiciously, or as suspicious as a Vulcan could get. "I believe you and your 'Quentin' have some explaining to do." Janeway looked down at Naomi.

> <br> "I concur, and your mother as well," she added. Naomi's face fell.

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> <br> It didn't take long for Naomi to explain the whole story. Or, as much as she knew about it. She told Captain Janeway, Tuvok, Seven of Nine, Neelix and her mother what Quentin had said, what they had done together, and what Quentin wanted Naomi to do. Quentin was present in the room the entire time, but didn't make any comments.

> <br> "He never was mean to me, Captain," Naomi said. "He was very nice and friendly. We had fun together." The group looked concern. Whoever this "Quentin" was, he had practically brainwashed the poor girl and made her believe whatever it was he was telling her.

> <br> "Naomi, is Quentin in this room right now?" Janeway asked.

Naomi nodded. "Can

> he hear me?". She nodded again. "Do you think you'd be able to relay messages between him and me?". She nodded once more. "Good." Quentin was not pleased, and neither was Q. But Q knew it wasn't yet time to reveal his plan. He was having way too much fun.<br>

> "Quentin," Janeway began. "We know from what Naomi has told us that you are not an imaginary friend. You are something else. What do you want with her?". <br>

> Naomi gazed up at invisible Quentin, listening to his answer. Then she turned back to the captain.<br>

> "He says that he's here on a mission and that he wouldn't hurt me or any of the crew," Naomi answered. "He also says thatâ€¦..oh, he says that Neelix makes the best meatloaf in the galaxy and he likes Seven of Nine'sâ€¦.Quentin! Sorry, Captain". Janeway tried to hide her laugh, as did Sam and Neelix. Tuvok and Seven of Nine waited. Naomi blushed. <br>

> "Quentin, is it possible for you to show yourself?" Janeway asked. <br>

> "Um, he says that he can but that he's not supposed to," Naomi answered. She paused. "He says that his superior told him not to." Janeway nodded her head. Naomi shifted in her seat, not liking to be interrogated or having Quentin being interrogated. <br>

> Suddenly, a bright light flashed and a tall gentleman with a cocky grin appeared in the middle of the ready room wearing red Starfleet uniform. Naomi mouth was agape and her eyes wide. <br>

> "Who are you?" she asked. The man smiled and bowed.<br>

> "I, my dear, am Q," he replied. "The one and only". Janeway crossed her arms and glared at him.<br>

> "What are you doing here? You aren't wanted," Janeway replied, her voice with a touch of anger.<br>

> "Well, I've found I'm not wanted in many places so sometimes I just have toâ€¦appear, you see," Q replied. "Actually, in a moment I will be wanted and I decided just to drop by early. Quentin, you can show yourself now." Another bright flashed next to Naomi, and Quentin, wearing a matching Starfleet uniform appeared. Quentin stomped down the steps and stopped next to Q. <br>

> "You don't need to be here. I can take care of it myself," he said. "This is my problem, not yours." Q smiled and nodded.<br>

> "You still are my apprentice, you know," Q said. "You don't have the wisdom of my 20 millennia's. Yes, you will need me. Captain, may I call Kathy? Kathy, this here, is my friend Quentin, he's a Q just like me, although he needs to work on his manners a bit. Didn't anyone ever tell you to respect your elders? Anyway, he wanted to learn about mortal children, I thought of little Naomiâ€|Hi Naomi, how big you're gettingâ€|and I wanted to see my dear Kathy, and well, poof. I made Quentin into an imaginary friend. Well, more like aâ€|like an imaginary Q." <br>

> "And then what?" Janeway asked, the sarcasm rising in her voice.  
<br>

> "And then you discovered our little secret and here I am," Q finished. "Just like I said." Naomi was completely confused. <br>

> "So, you guys are Q's? The people who can do anything they want to do?" Naomi asked. They nodded. "And Q wanted Quentin to become my imaginary friend because Q wanted to see the captain and Quentin wanted to learn about mortals?". They nodded again. "So you guys decided to pick me?" They nodded once again. Naomi sat silent for a moment, gathering everything in. Quentin wasn't who he said he was. He was a Q. He was only pretending to be her friend. Q had told Quentin to use Naomi as a guide to a child's mind. Naomi was very upset. Not only was she lied to, humiliated, and scolded at, she was also being used. <br>

> "So, now what?" Naomi asked. <br>

> "I'm so glad you asked, Naomi," Q replied. "Nothing. Quentin and I go home and you'll never see usâ€|for a while." The Q's smiled and snapped their fingers. They were gone. <br>

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> <br> A few days later, Naomi was sitting in the mess hall eating lunch and writing on a PADD. She was sitting alone, again, for all the usual reasons. But she was happy. She had learned a valuable lesson from meeting Quentin. First of all, don't lie. It will only get you in trouble. Second of all, friends can come in all shapes and sizes. Plus, she didn't always need other people to keep entertained. Over the course of the few days since Quentin and Q had left, Chakotay had showed Naomi something he sometimes did to pass the time. Write stories. Naomi had already finished one about Flotter and Treevus and she was writing a new one.

> <br> "Hey, Naomi," Tom said as he picked up his plate of soft, orange mush. "What are you up to?".

> <br> "I'm writing," Naomi replied.

> <br> "Cool," Tom said. "Can I read it?". Naomi nodded and handed the PADD over to

> him. At the top of the PADD was the title that read, "Imaginary Friend". <br>

> The End<font>

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file.